

Kayhan: Zionists in Basel Assad's death

TEHRAN (AFP) — An Iranian newspaper on Sunday accused the Israeli and U.S. intelligence services of masterminding the car crash in which Syrian President Hafez Al Assad's eldest son, Basel, was killed. "The Zionists are too anxious to deal with a Syria without another Hafez Al Assad. So the incident raises many questions," said the daily *Kayhan*. "We cannot exclude a role here for U.S. and Israeli agents." The newspaper said Basel was the most appropriate replacement for his father and Syria's "only hope" to continue the "tough political heritage" of Hafez Al Assad, who has ruled the country for 24 years. The paper added that Basel was his father's confidant, often chosen to launch secret negotiations on Hafez Al Assad's behalf, particularly with the Lebanese group Hezbollah. Basel's death came less than a week after Mr. Assad and U.S. President Bill Clinton held a summit meeting in Geneva in a bid to revive the Arab-Israeli peace process, which Iran fiercely opposes. In a condolence message to Assad Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani described Basel's death as a "tragic event."

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Team in S. Africa

AMMAN (Petra) — A Jordanian delegation headed by Upper House of Parliament Speaker Ahmad Al Lawzi arrived Sunday in Johannesburg on a week-long visit to South Africa. Mr. Lawzi will deliver letters from His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, to South African President F.W. de Klerk and African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela. The delegation will meet with South African officials and religious leaders for talks on enhancing political, economic and cultural cooperation between the two countries.

Beirut row kills schoolbus driver

BEIRUT (AP) — A schoolbus driver has been shot dead in front of his young passengers in an argument with a motorist over the right of passage at a road intersection north of Beirut. Friday's shooting near Dog River, 16 kilometres from the capital, underlined the unruliness on Lebanese roads, where traffic lights, damaged or stolen during the 1975-90 civil war, have yet to be reoperated. Police said two buses were ferrying students from the St. Joseph School when they locked horns at a road intersection with a car driven by a man named Simon Teress. After a shouting match that included an exchange of insults, Mr. Teress pulled a pistol and fatally shot one of the bus drivers in the head. The victim, Tanious Fahd, went down in a pool of blood in front of "weeping and shouting" students who included his son, according to the police report. Mr. Teress sped away after threatening passerby with his pistol. But he was arrested in Beirut the next day.

Kuwait may give more right to vote

KUWAIT (R) — The Kuwaiti government gave its initial approval to a law that would allow more Kuwaiti men to vote or run as candidates in general elections, the official Kuwaiti News Agency (KUNA) reported on Sunday. "The cabinet reviewed the proposed law and ... decided to approve it in principle," KUNA quoted Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Abdul Aziz Al Dakhil as saying after a weekly cabinet meeting. He said the proposed law would allow men born after their fathers' acquired Kuwaiti nationality to vote and run for election. Now, only Kuwaiti men over 21 who can trace their family roots in the emirate before 1920 are eligible to vote.

India protests Clinton comments

NEW DELHI (AP) — The Indian Foreign Ministry Sunday protested U.S. President Bill Clinton's statement on the Sikh insurgency in Punjab, saying "could have a negative impact on bilateral relations." Mr. Clinton said in a letter to Representative Gary Condit that he favours a peaceful solution to the fighting that protects Sikh rights. The letter was released to reporters Friday in Washington by the U.S.-based Council of Khalistan, a separatist lobby group. Mr. Condit had written to Mr. Clinton asking for an active U.S. role in solving the insurgency in the northern state of Punjab. The Indian ambassador in Washington, Sidhartha Shanker Ray, has been asked to meet U.S. officials to convey India's reaction.

32 massacred in Colombia

BOGOTA (AP) — Gunmen believed to be leftist guerrillas fired automatic weapons at a gathering of political rivals in northwest Colombia early Sunday, killing at least 32 people, authorities said. The massacre in the town of Apartado, 500 kilometres northwest of Bogota, was the bloodiest in Colombia in more than five years. Eight other people were wounded. About 200 people have been killed in political violence during the past year in the Apartado region.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
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Peace talks resume today amid mixed signals

Israel says accord with PLO is close; Rabin calls for Assad summit; Syria sees fresh chance

Combined agency dispatches

WASHINGTON — Arab and Israeli negotiators are scheduled to renew peace talks Monday in one-on-one meetings away from the media.

The chief negotiators for Syria, Lebanon and Jordan were due to meet their Israeli counterparts in undisclosed locations in Washington while a lower level Palestinian team will also hold talks with Israelis.

U.S. officials said Friday the death of Syrian President Hafez Al Assad's son in a car crash was not expected to delay the talks.

As participants prepared to talk in Washington, there were statements of optimism and obstacles from the Middle East:

— Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Sunday he and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat were "plenty close" to breaking a deadlock in implementing their peace accord.

"I think we are plenty close to an agreement but I prefer at

this time not to enter into details," Mr. Peres said. "Things that they said no to yesterday, they say require study today."

Mr. Peres and Mr. Arafat said they would meet again in Switzerland next Sunday.

— Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said he saw results in Palestinian-Israeli peace talks and called on President Assad to meet him "anyplace on earth."

Mr. Rabin said the meeting between Mr. Peres and Mr. Arafat would yield some progress in implementing the already delayed plan for Palestinian self-rule in the occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

"I think that Israel's clarification and clear stand on security issues are starting to have results," Mr. Rabin told reporters. "There is still no agreement around some of the security matters, but I hope that in time ... we will progress."

A dispute over control of border crossings is the main bone of contention. The

Israelis are demanding a veto on Palestinians entering the autonomous zone, while the PLO do not want any visible Israeli presence as it would infringe on their sovereignty.

According to Israeli media, Mr. Peres offered to let the Palestinians have sole control over the terminals, with Israeli monitoring through electronic surveillance. The crossing from Jordan to Israel would remain in Israeli hands.

Mr. Peres also offered the Palestinians a joint tourist site on the shores of the Dead Sea.

"I got the impression that (Arafat) wants to deliver the goods and complete the agreement," Mr. Peres said.

A dispute persists over the size of Jericho. Mr. Peres and Mr. Arafat are to take up their differences again during a conference of international leaders at Daos, Switzerland.

Yossi Beilin, deputy foreign minister and architect of the deal with the PLO, said Sunday the agreement would be violated if the Palestinians declared a state in Gaza and Jericho.

"It's very simple," Mr. Beilin said. "Once they decide unilaterally about a Palestinian state, there won't be a continuation of the process and there won't be a permanent solution," Mr. Beilin said, adding the Palestinians were fully aware of the ramifications and were not about to risk it.

Meanwhile, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators are to resume talks Monday in Washington will focus on elections to an autonomy council which are to take place in July under the autonomy accord.

According to Israel Radio, Mr. Arafat and Mr. Peres agreed on several points.

Israel will keep control of crossing points between the Gaza Strip and Egypt and between the West Bank and Jordan, it said. The PLO agreed that no Palestinian policemen would be on the bridge to Jordan but Palestinians travelling to Jericho would not be subjected to Israeli identity checks.

Israel also reportedly accepted that Jericho would enjoy the status of "capital" of Palestinian self-rule areas.

Musa due in Israel

EGYPTIAN Foreign Minister Amr Musa will make a brief trip to Israel Monday to talk to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Mr. Rabin's spokesman said Sunday.

Spokesman Gad Ben-Ari said the talks would be on Middle East issues but gave no further details. He said Musa was also expected to meet Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

"I don't put conditions to the meeting and I am not ready to accept conditions for such a meeting beyond what we are committed to," Mr. Rabin said.

Mr. Arafat briefed Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on attempts to break the deadlock over Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho area.

Mr. Arafat told reporters on arrival in Cairo: "There are many obstacles that have prevented implementation of this agreement. We expect that talks will continue in order to find new methods to remove these obstacles."

The idea of the private Washington talks is that private from the public eye, negotiators will feel less compelled to stick to entrenched positions and more at liberty to explore possible areas of compromise.

The key is expected to be the Syrian-Israeli talks, the first between the two sides since last September when negotiations were suspended after the disclosure that Israel had

(Continued on page 5)

House schedules urgent talks on Malhas' comments on food and medicine situation

By Ayman Al Safadi
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Spokesmen and presidents of parliamentary blocs and committees today held a "crucial meeting" to study allegations by Minister of Health Abdul Rahim Malhas that a good quantity of food and medicine sold in the country do not meet standards and specifications.

Acting Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Abdul Razzak Tabeishat called the meeting after some deputies demanded that the House hold an emergency session to discuss the minister's statements that first appeared in a weekly tabloid Thursday.

About 30 other deputies demanded that the House hold a general discussion of the government's regulations on the entry of food and medicine to the market.

Dr. Tabeishat told the Jordan Times Sunday that the meeting would agree on the steps that the House would take to investigate the minister's allegations and whether an extraordinary session will be held. He said the issue would be on the agenda of the house when it meets Wednesday.

Parliamentary sources said

the House was divided on whether a parliamentary investigation committee should be set up to look into the minister's statements that appeared in a lengthy interview in Shihab Arabic-language weekly.

The sources said that some deputies wanted to hear the government's response to the minister's statements before a course of action is decided, with some arguing that the issue should be handled by the judiciary.

"The issues addressed by the minister, if proven true, means that the health of people is in grave danger. They point to real financial, administrative and political corruption that require the government to take immediate, firm and fundamental measures. They also require that the representatives of the nation support the minister," said 30 deputies in a request to hold a special session to discuss the minister's allegations.

Dr. Malhas told the Jordan Times Friday that there was a deficiency in laws governing the sale of food and medicine in the market, pointing to the need of laws that would protect consumers.

He charged that a "mafia"

of food and drug merchants were violating the few existing laws that regulate the distribution of food and medicine. He said these merchants were resisting the new regulations. The Ministry of Health has introduced to ensure that food and drugs sold in the market meet certain standards and specifications.

Shihab quoted Dr. Malhas as saying that a good quantity of food and medicine that reach the market "is the garbage of the industrialised world and is unfit for human consumption."

But Dr. Malhas told the Jordan Times Friday that the weekly "blew (his remarks) out of proportion." He said Shihab "sensationalised" his statements.

President of Pharmacists Union Husameddin Mesmar Sunday denounced the minister's allegations and urged the government and the House to investigate remarks he made "against pharmacists."

Dr. Zaben said Dr. Malhas should have asked Parliament or the government to initiate laws if he saw a need for such laws.

The pharmacy and drug control directorate was established in the early 1980s by the then minister of health, Dr. Zubair Malhas.

Conflict between the ministry and the pharmacists' ministry goes back to 1987 when Zeid Hamzeh, then minister

(Continued on page 5)

Majali says U.S. is playing honest and constructive role

DOHA (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali said Sunday His Majesty King Hussein's discussion this week with the U.S. administration focused on the peace process with all its dimensions, aspects and tracks.

The King stressed Jordan's firm commitment to a comprehensive, just and durable solution based on United Nations resolutions, Dr. Majali said.

In a telephone interview with the Qatari daily Al Rayy from Washington, Dr. Majali said that consultations between Jordan and Syria and all other Arab parties are based on the search for a comprehensive solution in line with resolutions, international legitimacy and the land-in-exchange-for-peace principle.

Dr. Majali described the

U.S. role in the Arab-Israeli peace talks as active and positive, and said the U.S. administration headed by President Bill Clinton, was playing the role of an honest mediator.

Dr. Majali voiced satisfaction with the latest accord between Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), saying that coordination in all fields was continuing. He added that specialised joint coordination teams would be meeting soon in Amman and would submit reports about their meetings to the Higher Joint-Jordanian Palestinian Committee.

On future Jordanian-Palestinian relations, Dr. Majali said: "It is up to the two people to find the proper formula which can achieve their national objectives, aspirations and common interests."

Beedh urges his party to back reconciliation

ADEN (R) — Vice President Ali Salem Al Beedh has urged his Aden-based party to back a national accord aimed at ending a rift with northern partners that has plunged Yemen into a six-month political and economic crisis.

Political sources said Sunday that despite continuing tensions between northern and southern halves of the country that merged in 1990," Mr. Beedh made the call at a special meeting of the central committee of his Yemen Socialist Party (YSP).

They described the remarks late on Saturday as his most conciliatory towards his political rivals led by President Ali Abdullah Saleh since the crisis erupted last July.

The two men led North and South Yemen into uneasy union in May 1990.

The accord, worked out by an all-party committee last week, provided for political, economic, military and administrative reforms. These responded to several of 18 points previously listed by the YSP as conditions for solving the crisis, the sources said.

But both GPC and YSP continue to trade accusations despite a marked improvement in the political climate in the country that has led to an improvement in the value of the Yemeni rial. It was trading on Sunday at 62-63 rials to the U.S. dollar compared with 65 rials on the eve of the signing of the agreement last Tuesday and 75 a week earlier.

Southern military sources late on Saturday denied northern reports that Aden had

Arafat in flurry of Mideast contacts

PLO leader briefs Mubarak, visits Assad, due in S. Arabia

Combined agency dispatches

DAMASCUS — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on Sunday held a flurry of contacts with Arab leaders, including a visit to Syria where he offered his condolences to President Hafez Al Assad on the death of his eldest son, Basel, killed in a car crash two days ago.

They said Mr. Arafat met Mr. Assad at Kardaha, the Syrian leader's birthplace where Basel, 32, was buried on Saturday.

Mr. Arafat, who last visited Syria in September before the signing of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)-Israel peace accord, was expected to fly back to Cairo shortly, the officials said.

Syria's ties with the PLO were strained by the secretly negotiated peace agreement which Damascus strongly criticised.

Syria later softened its stance when it joined Gulf Arab states and Egypt in describing it as a step that should be followed by measures to

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat (left) shakes hands with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres as acting Norwegian Foreign Minister Bjoern Tore Godal looks on late Saturday after their talks in Oslo (AFP photo).

ruptured three years ago because of the PLO's pro-Iraq stance in the Gulf war.

Mr. Assad and Mr. Arafat were not expected to talk politics at their meeting.

(Continued on page 5)

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make a comprehensive peace in the region.

Mr. Arafat made the stopover in Syria on his way to Saudi Arabia for his first visit to the kingdom since relations were

Earlier Sunday, Mr. Arafat met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo to discuss ways of speeding up

(Continued on page 5)

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Tribunal needed for Hague Pan Am trial

THE HAGUE (R) — A special court in the Yugoslavia war crimes tribunal will have to be created if two Libyans suspected of blowing up a U.S. plane over Scotland are to be tried in the Hague, a legal expert said Sunday.

Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi said Saturday that a trial in the Hague could resolve his dispute with the West over his 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103, which killed 270 people.

"Under the World Court regime such a trial is not possible. So they should create something new — like the Yugoslavia war crimes tribunal — for that case," said Rob Siekmann of the Asser Institute of International Law.

The Hague-based U.N. Yugoslavia war crimes tribunal was set up by the Security Council to try those suspected of committing atrocities in former Yugoslavia.

The International Court of Justice, or World Court, is also based in the Hague.

If the states involved in the Lockerbie case requested the U.N. secretary-general to create an ad hoc tribunal for the trial, he could then ask the Security Council to do so, Mr. Siekmann said.

"If states and international organisations agree, they can create any tribunal they want," he said.

The Hague's reputation as the legal centre of the U.N. made it highly likely any ad hoc tribunal might be set up there, Mr. Siekmann said.

The International Court of Justice could not try the two men, court official Nadia Al Ali said.

"If the case is against individuals it won't come before the International Court of Justice," she said.

The World Court was set up under the U.N. Charter to settle disputes only between states, in accordance with international law.

The judges of the Yugoslavia war crimes tribunal would be ideal choices for such a trial, given their expertise in criminal law, he added.

Scottish law professor Robert Black has suggested the two Libyan suspects be tried in the Hague under Scots law with an international panel of judges rather than a jury.

Theoretically, the World

Court could try the men if Libya intervened on their behalf, Ms. Erian said.

"If Libya takes up the cause of the (suspects), another state has to take up the cause of the plaintiffs," she said.

But Mr. Siekmann said such an action, unprecedented in the World Court's history, would be difficult to formulate, as any sentence would have to be handed down to individuals rather than states.

Libya cuts budget

Libya has sharply cut its budget forecast for 1994 because of difficulties caused by U.N. sanctions, its prime minister said Sunday.

"The cut amounts to several billions (dollars)," Mr. Abouzid Omar Doudah told reporters after the commission of the general people's congress adopted the draft budget.

Figures for the new budget were not made available.

"As a result of the unjust U.N. sanctions we have been forced to cut our expenses in several domains like education and health," said Mr. Doudah, whose official title is secretary of the general popular committees.

The budget was set in such a way that Libya would rely less on oil, its main source of revenue, he said.

The U.N. imposed sanctions on Libya because of its refusal to hand over for trial the two suspected of carrying out the Pan Am bombing.

The measures were tightened in December to include a freeze of Libyan assets and a ban on imports of certain oil equipment.

A full embargo on oil is not excluded for the future and diplomats believe Libya may be preparing itself for such an option.

Mr. Doudah said Libya has secured part of its assets abroad before the freeze but he gave no figures.

"Our assets abroad amount to several billions of dollars and we did all what we could do to protect them," he said.

The West aimed to turn Libya into a debtor nation, he said.

The TRNC's new coalition government, formed after parliamentary elections on Dec. 12, agreed Thursday to resume talks with the Greek-Cypriots on a package of confidence-building measures proposed by the United Nations.

In anticipation of Mr.

Denktash said ready to cooperate with U.N.

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash is ready to cooperate with the U.N. chief and resume inter-communal talks with Greek-Cypriot Clerides, the Turkish-Cypriot Tak news agency reported Saturday.

In a letter to U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali released Saturday, Mr. Denktash also said he had resumed his duties as negotiator at the U.N.-sponsored talks aimed at resolving the Cyprus problem.

Mr. Denktash, president of the self-proclaimed Turkish republic of northern Cyprus (TRNC) — declared in 1983 and recognised only by Ankara — quit as negotiator for the Turkish-Cypriot community in July 1993 due to differences with his prime minister at the time, Dervish Eroglu.

In his letter, Mr. Denktash repeated that it would be useful to resume the inter-communal discussions in Nicosia, the divided capital of Cyprus, rather than in New York, adding that the Turkish side placed great importance on security matters.

The TRNC's new coalition government, formed after parliamentary elections on Dec. 12, agreed Thursday to resume talks with the Greek-Cypriots on a package of confidence-building measures proposed by the United Nations.

The Turkish-Cypriot side agrees to return to the talks with "no pre-conditions," after a break of several months, Mr. Denktash said, adding that they "insist on certain principles."

But the president of the divided island, Mr. Clerides, reacted with scepticism, insisting the Turkish-Cypriots clarify their stand.

Denktash must state clearly whether he still insists on recognition of his pseudo-state and of the sea and air ports," he told Cypriot radio.

"Otherwise the Greek-Cypriots will not be prepared to resume the dialogue," warned Mr. Clerides.

The confidence-building measures call for Nicosia airport, closed for two decades, to be reopened and for the Turkish-Cypriots to hand over to the United Nations part of the coastal city of Famagusta.

Turkish troops invaded the north of Cyprus in 1974 in the wake of a short-lived coup in Nicosia engineered by the right-wing junta then ruling Greece.

In New York, a U.N. spokesman said Thursday that Dr. Ghali's special representative to Cyprus, Joe Clark, would embark Saturday on a week-long tour of Nicosia, Athens and Ankara.

In anticipation of Mr.

personal carrier after coming under attack from forces loyal to President Burhanuddin Rabbani during fighting in Kabul (AFP photo)

Gaza goes for guns ahead of autonomy

By Robert Mahoney

Reuter

GAZA — The Young Palestinian pulled out 4,000 from his top pocket. He was going hopping — for guns.

A year ago he probably would have returned home with his cash unspent. Then it was virtually impossible to find good guns for sale in the Gaza Strip owing to an Israeli blockade.

But since the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) peace deal last September pistols and assault rifles have been trickling into Gaza with the knowledge of the Israeli security services. Palestinian activists and arms dealers say.

Gazans have also been opening up arms and ammunition caches hidden during the Palestinian intifada.

Israeli security sources agree arms are spreading but they deny the Shin Bet internal security service is turning a blind eye.

They say both Israel and the PLO have an interest in restricting weapons before the unruly strip is handed over to limited Palestinian self-government later this year.

But the young man with the money insists some weapons are coming in with the knowledge of the Shin Bet who has informers among the Palestinian thieves and drug dealers who help supply arms from Israel through a chain of middlemen to political groups.

"The (secret) police know all about it," said the younger from the Fatah hawks, a military wing of Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction of the PLO.

He said most of the weapons were pistols for personal protection although American M-16 and Israeli Galil semi-automatic rifles were also coming.

Senior Fatah men, he said, now routinely carried concealed pistols, openly carrying a weapon still spells death or arrest for a Palestinian.

The new demand has pushed up prices for all guns except Russian-designed AK-47 rifles. A shortage of bullets for this highly-popular guerrilla weapon, not used in Israel, has slashed its street price by 25 per cent to around \$5,000.

The price of an M-16 has risen about \$2,000 to \$9,000 depending on how many middlemen are involved. A pistol

such as a Beretta goes for \$3,000 upwards.

Some weapons, particularly pistols and AK-47s are smuggled from neighbouring Egypt, the Fatah hawk said. Most are either stolen from Israelis or bought from them for cash or drugs, he added.

The only problem for gun-owners is the scarcity of ammunition. A bullet costing 90 agorot (30 cents) in Israel ends up costing 10 to 12 shekels (\$3.5 to \$4) by the time it reaches Gaza.

Young boys rummage through garbage from Israeli army bases for bullets and scour army shooting ranges for dropped ammunition which they can sell for huge profits.

In interviews with Reuters other political activists, go-betweens and criminals confirmed this assessment.

Only Hamas said it was forbidden for religious reasons from using the hashish or cocaine it seized from Gazan addicts and dealers to buy arms.

Does this mean anyone in Gaza can buy a gun? No, say both the PLO and Hamas.

"You have to be from an organisation," said a Hamas mem-

ber.

Hamas, the PLO's main rival and opponent of the deal with Israel, so far agrees.

The PLO man agreed, "I will not burn our guns on Palestinians," the Hamas member said. But he insisted that Hamas, unlike Fatah, would continue to procure weapons to attack Israel.

Many of those interviewed believed Israel was ignoring the spread of small arms because it wanted to encourage internal Palestinian strife.

If we Gazans are not busy fighting each other then we will busy ourselves by fighting the Israelis," one Islamic Activist said.

One Israeli security source dismissed this as twisted machiavellian thinking.

"High-level contacts between Israel and the PLO leadership on security in Gaza are continuing. Both sides want the Palestinian police to be well-armed and equipped to maintain security when autonomy comes," the source said.

Whether Israel is turning a blind eye to the gun dealers or not the increased availability of arms is evident.

"Anybody with the right connections can get a weapon now," said one dealer.

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Home News

JORDAN TIMES, MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 1994 3

Ferry company nets \$9 m profit in 1993

AMMAN (Petra) — The Arab Maritime Bridge Company (AMBC) which operates a ferry service between Aqaba and the Sinai port of Nuweibeh last year made a \$9 million profit amounting to 15 per cent of the company's total capital, according to an announcement here Sunday.

Mohamad Dalabi, the company's general director, said that in 1993 the ferries transported 29,000 passengers with their luggage and vehicles, up from 14,000 in 1989.

In outlining services of AMBC, which is owned by Iraq, Jordan and Egypt equally, Mr. Dalabi said the ferry service was running smoothly because of the good facilities provided to travellers by authorities at the Aqaba and Nuweibeh ports.

The ferries currently operate twice daily commuting between Nuweibeh and Aqaba, but plans are underway to increase the trips, said Mr. Dalabi.

The fare for the passengers

and vehicles are set by the Jordanian-Egyptian protocol: It is JD 8 for Jordanians and Egyptians per one-way trip. The fare for other travellers is \$16.

Mr. Dalabi said AMBC operates three ferries: the "Concord" which accommodates 3,000 passengers and 35 vehicles, the "Jimmy" which takes 1,650 passengers and nine vehicles, and the "Noor" which can take up to 9,000 passengers and 22 vehicles.

The company owns 25 per cent of each of the ferries and rents the rest from their owners, but in four years AMBC will take full ownership under an agreement concluded with the shipowners, said Mr. Dalabi.

In addition, the company plans to purchase tourist boats to operate between the port of Aqaba and the neighbouring ports, he said.

In line with the expansion, he added, the company purchased a plot of land on which to build its permanent headquarters in Aqaba.

vestment, said Mr. Awad. He suggested the formation of a joint Canadian-Jordanian committee to convene as soon as possible and chart a programme for expanding trade links.

Mr. Awad, who noted that the Jordanian economy faced difficulties over the last few years because of developments in the region, said the country's laws offer attractive incentives to investors from Arab and foreign countries.

Mr. Awad told the Jordan Times that the Canadian team, currently on a tour of four Arab countries, is exploring possibilities for launching joint ventures and studying the prospects of new markets in the Arab World.

Asked about Jordan's imports from Canada, Mr. Awad said that they range between \$7 million and \$10 million annually mainly in industrial equipment, but he noted that Jordan's exports to the North American country are less than \$5 million.

Mr. Awad said the Canadian team came to Jordan at the invitation of the JCBC which groups industry representatives and other businesspersons in the Kingdom.

He said the visit comes less than two weeks after a visit to Jordan by the Premier of the

Canadian state of Ontario, Bob Rae, who was accompanied by a trade delegation to discuss promoting trade and economic links.

The Canadian team later met with Mohammad Asfour, chairman of the Federation of the Jordanian Chambers of Commerce to discuss business and trade relations.

Mr. Robinson was quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, as saying that his country was striving to bolster its ties with Jordan in all fields, especially economic and trade links.

The Canadian government has been dispatching trade teams to the Arab region in the last few years with the purpose of achieving better and stronger economic ties with them, said the ambassador.

Mr. Asfour told the visitors that the Middle East region, and especially Jordan, was about to witness changes and developments in which Jordan would play a key role in view of its central geographic location.

Later the Jordan-Canada Business Council held a meeting with the visiting Canadian group.

At the meeting Deputy Chairman of the Jordanian Businessmen's Association



Deputy Chairman of the Jordanian Businessmen's Association Ibrahim Zein (right) speaks at a meeting of the Jordan-Canada Business Council. Also on the podium, from left to right

are Canadian Ambassador to Jordan Andrew Robinson and head of a visiting team of Canadian businesspersons Lambert Toupin

the reason behind the tour in the Arab World, and the visit to Jordan.

He expressed hope that the visit would end with a general framework for increasing trade and economic relations.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Art exhibition by Syrian artist Yasser Hammond at Baladina Art Gallery (Wasfi Al Tal Street).
- ★ Exhibition by Lebanese artist Hussein Madi at Darat Al Fannm of the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation. Also showing the "permanent" exhibition of 54 Arab contemporary artists. (Tel. 643251/2)
- ★ Art exhibition by artist Raja Abu Ghazaleh and Mohammad Al Jalous at the Jordan Writers Association.
- ★ Art exhibition by artist Makram Khaghandouq at the Spanish Cultural Centre.
- ★ Art exhibition by artist Omar Al Basoul at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition on the art of architecture at the French Cultural Centre.
- ★ Art exhibition by several Iraqi and Jordanian artists at Orlfa Art Gallery (Tel. 826932).

FILMS

- ★ Short film in French entitled "Pingouin Blues" at the French Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.
- ★ Film in French entitled "L'OURS" at the French Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.
- ★ Film entitled "The Mississippi is Burning" at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art at 6:00 p.m.

SLIDE-LECTURE

- ★ Slide-lecture about the many well preserved antique villages in the limestone Massif area in northern Syria by Mr. Jacques Seigne at the Friends of Archaeology Centre at 7:00 p.m.

DRAMA

- ★ Drama entitled "Hamlet Wakes Up Again" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 7:00 p.m.

SEMINAR

- ★ Seminar entitled "Women's Rights in the Nationality and Passports Law" with the participation of Lower House of Parliament Member Ms. Toujan Faisal, Dr. Husni Al Shuyab and Mr. Munther Hanu at the Royal Cultural Centre at 6:00 p.m.



REVIEWING JUDICIAL SYSTEMS: Justice Minister Tamer Hikmat Sunday receives visiting Qatari Islamic Cleric Sheikh Abdul Aziz Saleh Al Khalifeh and accompanying officials and briefed them on the ministry's work, saying that the ministry provides the necessary cadres for developing judicial procedures, but does not interfere in the judiciary. Sheikh Khalifeh reviewed the judicial system in his country and voiced

hope for closer cooperation between the judicial systems in both countries. Mr. Hikmat said the visit by the Islamic clerics represents another step on the path of enhancing the brotherly relations between both countries. The meeting was attended by the ministry's Secretary General Mahmoud Hijazi and Qatari Ambassador to Jordan Nasser Ben Abdul Aziz Ali Nasser.

Sahab water shortage to be solved by new pipe

AMMAN (Petra) — Factories in the Sabab Industrial City and the Jordan Industrial Estates Corporation (JIEC) Sunday voiced their deep concern over water shortages affecting the industrial city, stressing that such shortages over the last four years have been obstructing industrial development.

The issue was raised with Minister of Water and Irrigation Hisham Al Khatib and Minister of Industry and Trade Rima Khalaf by JIEC Director General Fayed Suhaimat at a meeting held at the industrial

city Sunday. Of the city's 314 factories, only 260 receive regular water supplies, complained Mr. Suhaimat. He said at least 15,000 people work or visit Sabab Industrial City daily, making adequate water supplies necessary in addition to water needed as an essential component in certain industries, Mr. Suhaimat said.

Following the discussion, an agreement was reached to lay a major water pipe directly from the main water tower in the region to the Sabab Industrial City.

Reporting link shifts at Palestinian Affairs Department

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The director general of the Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA) has become responsible to Minister of State Adel Isheid after a decision by the Cabinet to shift the DPA head from reporting to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The DPA is an independent government institution but, for reasons of reporting to a higher authority, its director general had previously been linked to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The DPA had been known as the Ministry of Occupied Territories until 1988 when Amman severed legal and administrative ties with the West Bank.

From 1988 on, the DPA has acted as a facilitator by verifying

various documents for the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

It also coordinates various needs for the Palestinians with the respective government institutions, especially in the areas of health, education and agriculture.

Another area where the DPA is involved is in ensuring the smooth flow of people crossing the bridges to the occupied territories.

The responsibilities of the DPA in the Kingdom involve close cooperation with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) to provide the most possible services to refugees in camps besides ensuring a good infrastructure and adequate basic facilities at these camps.

From 1988 on, the DPA was run by Ahmad Oatanani who, in 1991, was transferred to the

post of adviser at the Prime Ministry.

Mr. Isheid took over as DPA director general until he became Minister of State in December.

The DPA is now being run by Asem Ghoshel who, had previously held the posts of secretary general at the minis-

tries of Energy, Youth and Rural Affairs.

The department has been credited as a strong backup to the Jordanian negotiating team with Israel since it houses comprehensive studies and reports on the occupied territories and the developments that took place since 1967.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Regent congratulates Norway

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Sunday sent a cable to King Harald V of Norway congratulating him in his name and on behalf of the Jordanian people and government on the anniversary of his accession to the throne. Prince Hassan wished King Harald good health and happiness and the Norwegian people further progress and prosperity.

Royal Decree issued

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal Decree was issued Sunday approving the appointment of Safwan Rizq Al Bataineh as advisor at the prime ministry.

EMBASSY OF INDIA

AMMAN

Republic Day of India

On the occasion of the Republic Day of India, a flag hoisting ceremony will be held on Wednesday, January 26, 1994 at 10 a.m. at the premises of the embassy of India, First Circle, Jabal Amman (Opp. Malhas Hospital).

All Indians with their family members are cordially invited to attend the function.



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3 Indian world cyclists visit Jordan

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Three young Indian students on a world trip on bicycles are now visiting Jordan, carrying their "message of peace and goodwill."

Dinesh Chandran, 23, Suresh K.N., 22, and Suresh Kumar K.V., 21, who arrived in Jordan late Wednesday, are in the early stage of their trip, during which they hope to cover at least 60 countries and nearly 90,000 kilometres.

The three, all university students from the south Indian city of Bangalore, launched their trip in Nairobi, Kenya, where they arrived by air along with their bicycles on Nov. 18.

From Kenya, they cycled through Uganda and then Sudan and Egypt before taking a ferry from Nuweibeh to Aqaba. From Jordan they plan to pass through Syria, Turkey and Bulgaria and then continental Europe. Mr. Chandran told the Jordan Times.

"We are on a mission of peace and goodwill for all," he said. "We intend to spread this message and also have



Indian cyclists Dinesh Chandran, Suresh Kumar K.V. and Suresh K.N.

was never a problem in Uganda, Sudan or Egypt, he added.

In Jordan, they plan to visit Madaba and Mount Nebo and to have a stopover at Jerash on their way to Syria. "We cover an average of 100 kilometres to 125 kilometres per day," he added.

The three plan to leave Jordan by the end of this week.

Features

House schedules urgent talks

(Continued from page 11)

of health, insisted that pharmacies be attended by registered pharmacists.

Dr. Hamzeh also banned the sale of medicine without prescriptions, except for "over the counter" drugs.

Informed sources said the ban was introduced to limit the sales of addictive drugs.

In his interview with Shiban, Dr. Malhas said that "pressure was applied" to overrule a Higher Court of Justice verdict that said pharmacies should be run by pharmacists in whose names they are registered.

The Council for the Interpretation of Laws has overruled the court's verdict on the basis of a 1975 ruling that says pharmacists should not be in charge of their own pharmacies.

Dr. Zaben said that food shipments were also examined by specialised committees before being allowed into the country.

Other sources familiar with the situation, however, said that the inspection of food was the responsibility of va-

rious government ministries and departments and that that allows for confusion and inefficiency.

One source said that there were previous attempts to have one agency responsible for the examination of food "but unfortunately there was a power struggle (among the various bodies) and the effort never succeeded."

Sources pointed to the controversy over cooking fat shipments that did not meet specifications but were sold in the market in 1989 as evidence of the inefficiency of some of the departments entrusted with inspecting food sold in the Kingdom.

"Only a thorough investigation can end the controversy created by the minister's statement," said a source familiar with the issue on the condition of anonymity.

"What the minister said is dangerous," he said. "It has to be investigated."

"Parliament is taking the matter very seriously. It will take the proper action on it," said Dr. Tabeeshat.

Arafat in flurry of contacts

(Continued from page 1)

the Middle East peace process.

After the session, chief PLO negotiator Nabil Shaath said his team would meet again Tuesday with Israeli delegates on the key issues holding up Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

Dr. Shaath said the talks on such sticky issues as who would guard borders to Jordan and Egypt would resume in the Egyptian resort of Taba. Separate talks on civilian issues start Monday, he said.

The consultations with Mr. Mubarak, who often has served as a mediator in Middle East disputes, followed a meeting between Mr. Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres on Saturday at the PLO-Israeli peace deal.

He went to see Sultan Qaboos Ben Sa'Id in September before flying to Washington to attend the White House signing ceremony of the PLO-Israeli peace deal.

form the pilgrimage often call

on King Fahd as a matter of courtesy but Mr. Arafat was looking for something more than an informal chat. Arab diplomats said.

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have so far rebuffed the PLO's overtures to normalise ties while the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman have responded favourably.

Oman is the only Gulf Arab state to have so far officially received Mr. Arafat, once a frequent visitor to Saudi Arabia.

"I had 200 calls in two days," Ms. Lanzolla said, "and we're only one of seven agencies in Seattle. Multiply that by

Bosnians adapt to America, wonder why so few given the chance

SEATTLE (AP) — Emir Grcic, a blond Muslim with a new checkbook and a churchful of friends, is baffled when U.S. authorities say America can absorb only several thousand Bosnian refugees a year.

As a fresh alumnus of a firing squad — a Serb officer recognised him as a soccer star and spared his life — Mr. Grcic qualified as a Bosnian terror victim and chanced upon a rare U.S. visa.

"People are so welcoming here," he said, knocking back apple cider at a holy family Catholic Church social, surrounded by people who cannot imagine losing 22 kgs in a concentration camp.

Helped by sponsors, Mr. Grcic found his own job and bought a car so he no longer gets up for a 5 a.m. bus. His two sons study in English. His wife is happy. And his new soccer team now dazzles the league.

Refugee workers say that Emir Grcic across the country put into question U.S. policy that lets in only a trickle of desperate Bosnians on grounds that communities cannot make room for them.

"This country could take many, many more Bosnians," said Melody Lanzolla, whose Seattle affiliate of Church World Service seeks families to help refugees settle in. "Response is phenomenal."

In October 1992, after cameras showed walking skeletons in Serb detention camps, U.S. officials allowed 1,000 visas for released prisoners. Volunteer agencies made a nationwide appeal for sponsors.

"I had 200 calls in two days," Ms. Lanzolla said, "and we're only one of seven agencies in Seattle. Multiply that by

the rest of the country."

Because of bureaucracy and poor communication, she said, it was eight months before the first refugees arrived. They waited in grim camps in Croatia while some sponsors moved on to other causes.

Last March, the annual quota was raised to 3,000 so Bosnians in the United States could bring in close relatives. But despite a huge demand, U.N. and U.S. officials processed only 2,000 cases.

Senior Department officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, blamed slow processing on a reluctance to accept refugees at a time when Americans are believed to be wary of foreigners.

After a year of shelling, confinement, starvation and torture, he managed to leave Bosnia again. His friends at Boeing found him only after he obtained again. His friends at Boeing found him only after he obtained a U.S. visa and was headed to another state.

His family of four is jammed into John Stannard's suburban home, but all nine occupants say they would not have it any other way.

"You can't believe what we went through trying to get him here," Mr. Stannard said. A second friend joined in to describe what he called impenetrable, unhelpful official American bureaucracy.

Even with local support, refugees face problems. They need someone to drive them around to social welfare offices and doctors. Most spend hours at the dentist, often losing a mouthful of teeth.

Social activity often centres around a church or a Jewish temple, worrying parents who want to keep the Muslim faith fresh in their children's minds.

Dizdarevic, an electronics engineer, can't find even unskilled work. A few Bosnians, unable to adapt, end up wishing they had stayed home.

But most no longer have a home. Return is impossible.

missed two years of class, running for her life. She so outshone her classmates that she was bumped up to senior.

"Now she tutors her American friends," said Betty Turulja, Melita's aunt, who has lived in Seattle since 1957. "Everyone loves her."

Emir Dizdarevic is back in Seattle again. He first came for electronics training at Boeing. When his visa expired, authorities would not accept him home, land-in-flames as extenuating circumstances.

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With a little pocket money from sponsors and basic welfare coverage, families work their way into the American dream.

Mr. Grcic is on the fast track. Handsome and humorous at 33, with blue eyes, a beautiful wife and kids who might be Norwegians, he shatters stereotypes about the Balkans and Islam.

"They wanted me to fight for some stupid idea," he said. "I did not want the war. We are innocent civilians and we have lost everything we had."

His wife, Enisa, sniffed trouble early and took the boys over the river to Croatia. Within days, Serbs attacked their town, Brcko, and sealed the bridge.

"In a few days, they killed 5,000 people," he said. "They put the bodies into a factory that grinds up animal bones. They dug holes for people. All day they killed. I was ready to die."

Mr. Grcic was lined up to be shot but, at last minute, a Serb saved him. Instead, he spent six months in a concentration camp, so starved that he could not stand up. For months, Enisa had no news.

Eventually, he was freed in a prisoner exchange.

"I feel like I never have been in that country," he said. "I am lucky because I am here. First, I was Yugoslavia. Then I was a Bosnian. Now I am an American."

Family in Seattle brings out relatives

SEATTLE (AP) — War in Bosnia was a long way off for Betty Turulja until the evening news showed her own brother lying in a pool of blood, wounded among a pile of corpses in a Sarajevo bread line.

"That was it," said Mrs. Turulja, a Bosnian refugee from an earlier generation. "I got on a plane, determined to bring out my family."

Her brother is still in Sarajevo, but she brought home her sister, another brother, a niece and a nephew, getting them safely through barrages of bullets and bureaucracy.

Back in Seattle, her husband, Mohammad, got visas for his own nieces and nephews. Together, the Turuljas have brought out 14 Bosnians, all on family reunification visas.

"So many more people are still there, desperate and dying," Betty said, stabbing a finger at the tattered list of official phone numbers she calls daily to demand action. "We must stop this war."

In March, she travelled to the Bosnia-Croatia border, where she befriended a group of Bosnian soldiers who smuggled her sister and two daughters out of Sarajevo.

At the same time, she tracked down her brother, Resad Hadzimesic, 53, who had been imprisoned and tortured. His wife stayed in Zenica with their 3-year-old daughter to care for their blind mother.

Now she wants to return for her other brother, Dzemil, and also Resad's wife and daughter. "I can't bear thinking about another winter," she said. "It is unbelievable that this has to go on."

Mr. Turulja, a retired clothier, brought his family to Seattle in 1957. The Nazis had killed his brother, and he said Serbs put 145,000 Bosnian Muslims to death between 1941 and 1945.

He knows there are other sides to the complex situation, but he thinks few Americans are paying attention for fear of seeing modern genocide that might force them to get involved.

"People are saying, 'hurry up and finish so we don't have to watch,'" Mr. Turulja said. "But I think the whole world misjudged the Bosnian nation."

The Turuljas' 30-year-old son, Dean, nearly went to Bosnia to fight, but decided to stay home and stir up support for ending the war.

"I've seen my parents give everything to this community," he said. "They've taken care of people, sent food and supplies to refugees, raised money with speeches."

Like his father, he decried what he called a double standard among most Americans who speak about human rights but do little to help. "They don't want to know," he said.

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33 Motorcycle Repair

52 Surveying & Mapping

22 Wildlife/Forestry Conservation

47 Animal Care Specialist

260B Building Trades

106 General Business

16 Practical English

41 Journalism/Short Story Writing

50 Starting Your Own Business

U.S. economy bent, not broken, by quake and freeze

WASHINGTON (R) — An earthquake on the west coast and frigid weather in the east brought huge sections of the United States to a virtual standstill last week, but it won't baffle a healthy economy off course.

With the U.S. economy roaring ahead at about a 5.6 per cent annual rate late last year, a slowdown is not such a bad thing. It can help prevent overheating, analysts said.

Nature's rough hand will depress economic activity in January, robbing about half a percentage point or more from national output in the first quarter of 1994, they said.

Although confident the economy can sustain the blow, analysts are divided over its longer term impacts.

"Optimists say the winter snap could turn into a spring caress. 'We were looking for four per cent first-quarter growth. Now we would be more com-

fortable with three per cent,'" said Russell Sheldon, economist at Mellon Bank.

"By the second quarter, we will probably get back everything we lost, and possibly more," Mr. Sheldon said.

As a warming trend chases away sub-zero temperatures which gripped Kentucky in the south of Maine and Minnesota in the north, shoppers will return to deserted malls shuttered factories will step up production to meet busy schedules and housing construction will surge again, he said.

In Los Angeles, meanwhile, the earthquake that brought parts of America's second largest metropolis to its knees will unleash a rush of spending.

"What we learned from two recent hurricanes and an earthquake is that in each case, the economy actually performs better" after natural disasters, said Brian Keyser, economist

at Nationsbank.

Early estimate for rebuilding Los Angeles put the costs at least at \$15 billion to \$20 billion. That could add half a percentage point to 1994 gross domestic product, now at three to four per cent, starting in the second quarter, Mr. Keyser said.

But other analysts take a less optimistic view of disasters.

"Just because we throw a brick through the window does not mean the economy will always pick up," said Sung Won Sohn, chief economist at Norwest Corp.

The money to rebuild has to come from somewhere — a depletion of personal savings, less consumption in non-essential areas, higher government taxes or an erosion of revenues at insurance companies.

"While we obviously get some stimulative effect, it does not mean on balance we as a

nation will be better off in the long run," Mr. Sohn said.

He estimates that the weather will depress GDP in the January to March period by 0.2 per cent with the earthquake adding an additional 0.8 per cent. For the rest of the year, overall GDP will be slightly lower than previously forecast, Mr. Sohn said.

Lawrence Chimerine, a New Jersey-based economic consultant, said many analysts are underestimating the economic impact of the rigid weather. Some people will halt spending plans altogether.

High heating bills, for instance, in northern states — where temperatures have been 15-20 degrees below normal for four or five weeks — will hurt many people's budgets, he said.

At the same time, it will take three or four months before earthquake victims get insurance checks or financial aid.

While there probably is still enough steam in the economy right now for it is still to achieve 2½ per cent to 3.0 per cent growth in the first quarter, Mr. Chimerine said the economy has suffered a shock.

"There is a risk that this will undermine or short circuit the economy," he said.

Meanwhile, President Bill Clinton, in a preview of his State of the Union address, has said the nation's economy has "turned the corner" and predicted next year's federal deficit will fall below \$180 billion.

Mr. Clinton, who spent the weekend at Camp David preparing for his Tuesday night address to a joint session of Congress and a national television audience, said that after one year in office "we built the foundation for a lasting economic recovery."

"The recovery is not yet complete," Mr. Clinton said in his weekly radio address. Mr. Clinton said that based on the improving economy

Budget Director Leon Panetta has revised the deficit projection for fiscal year 1995.

In December, Mr. Panetta told a White House briefing that his best estimate for the deficit in the next fiscal year would be in the neighbourhood of \$190 billion.

Mr. Clinton credited the improvement to the five-year budget plan approved by Congress last year. It was designed to reduce the size of the federal deficit by \$500 billion over five years and cut spending by \$255 billion.

Mr. Panetta issued a statement saying the "projected deficit has been reduced by 40 per cent" compared with the \$300 billion estimate made before the administration's economic plan was approved.

White House aides said Mr. Clinton was working on his State of the Union address during his visit to Camp David and that economic revival

would be a major theme.

A recent CBS News/New York Times poll found that 50 per cent of Americans felt the economy was fairly good or very good — with 67 per cent believing it will be very good or fairly by the end of Mr. Clinton's term in office.

In another topic of his upcoming address, Mr. Clinton is not over whether to provide health security, but how and how quickly.

Senator William Cohen of Maine, in the Republican response, said health care would likely "occupy much of Congress" this year.

"If we use good will and commitment by both parties, we can produce a health care bill that is satisfactory to all," Mr. Cohen said, as long as it avoided business taxes, price controls and new widespread regulations.

Clarke defends British tax rises

LONDON (R) — Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth Clarke, painting an upbeat picture of the British economy, Sunday defended imminent tax rises and said they would have been much higher under the opposition Labour Party.

With the embattled Conservative government facing a bruising week in parliament over tax hikes, the finance minister said Britain was into a sustainable recovery and could have western Europe's strongest economy by the 21st century.

Official figures have dented Conservative claims that they are the "low tax" party, revealing that from the start of the next tax year in April the average family will be paying more tax than it did under

Labour in 1979.

Mr. Clarke, facing attacks over the imposition of tax on domestic fuel bills, said: "I have to impose whatever tax is necessary to get us more growth and more jobs... if you had a Labour chancellor now, taxes would be much much higher."

In an interview with BBC Television, he argued that Labour cut taxes in 1979 as a failed vote-winning play at a time when the economy was debt-ridden and riddled with inflation.

Labour finance spokesman Harriet Harman said: "Never again can they say they are the party of low taxation. No one will ever trust the Tories (Conservatives) on tax again."

She said typical families paid 32.2 per cent of earnings in tax in 1978/79 but would pay 35 per cent from April.

Tax rises are being brought in to combat a soaring deficit that Mr. Clarke has pledged to eliminate by the year 2000.

The bad news on tax hit millions of Britons this month when they were sent details of their tax coding for the next financial year.

Mr. Clarke said Britain was leading the way out of recession.

"Any German, any French, any Japanese actually would think a chancellor talking about two per cent growth last year and at least 2.5 per cent next year is something they are deep in

recession," he said.

Prime Minister John Major's government, recovering after 18 tumultuous months of policy U-turns and party mutinies over Europe, was then hit over the new year by financial and sex scandals that led to ministerial resignations.

Mr. Clarke conceded: "If you are in a hole, it takes some time to get to the top of it."

The Conservatives are trailing Labour badly in opinion polls but clearly hope, with an election still three years away, that economic recovery will spell political recovery.

Mr. Clarke said: "In the long term I believe that by the end of the decade we could have the strongest economy in western Europe."

Raytheon plans Kuwait energy project

KUWAIT (R) — U.S. firm Raytheon Co. Sunday signed a \$98.2 million offset memorandum of agreement with Kuwait on its sale of Patriot air defence missiles and said it planned a major investment in the emirate's energy sector.

The agreement is the third and largest under the emirate's fledgling offset programme aimed at diversifying the economy away from reliance on oil, its one natural resource.

Raytheon planned to help design and build an energy-related facility that would be worth "many times" the offset obligation and take 3½ years to complete. Thomas Peter-

son, Raytheon's manager, international development, Patriot programmes, said.

The facility would manufacture "a totally new product from Kuwait" and would transfer technology to the emirate, he said.

He said in an interview the proposed joint venture was not in the petrochemical field and not part of Kuwaiti privatisation "at this point in time" but declined to describe it in detail.

"Obviously we are looking at areas where we can take what Kuwait is known for, its energy, and use it for value added projects, not just for

crude resource production," he said.

Finance ministry undersecretary Abdul Mohsen Al Hunaif, who signed the accord with Mr. Peterson, said he hoped it would be the start of "real business" between Kuwait and Raytheon.

Under offset rules introduced since the 1991 Gulf war, foreign firms winning sales contracts worth one million dollars (\$3.3 million) or more must reinvest 30 per cent of the contract value in a project of their choice.

Raytheon is supplying Kuwait with five firing units and several hundred missiles.

The Patriot was designed to be an anti-aircraft missile but

became a star of the Gulf war when the U.S. military said Patriots were shooting down Iraqi Scud missiles.

As the defence industry starts to shrink, obviously companies like Raytheon are looking for ways to expand their business in other areas. Kuwait's offset programme helps us do that, whereas offset in some other countries is designed merely to enable them to copy what we do," Mr. Peterson said.

He said the project would not be outside Raytheon's core area of expertise because it was now the second largest engineering company in the United States in terms of sales.

He noted Raytheon's subsidiary firms had built oil refineries and power plants elsewhere in the world.

Economists: Yemen budget deficit up 59% in 1993

ADEN (R) — Cash-squeezed Yemen's budget deficit rose by more than a half in 1993, economists said.

And a political row is preventing its leaders from agreeing a national budget for the second year running, they added.

The economists said government expenditure in 1993 totalled 74 billion riyals (\$6.1 billion) with revenues around 32 billion riyals (\$2.6 billion) leaving a deficit of 42 billion riyals (\$3.5 billion).

They did not say where the money came from to finance the deficit, which was 59 per cent bigger than the \$2.2 billion deficit Yemen announced in 1992.

The figures were calculated at an unrealistic official rate of 12 Yemeni riyals to the dollar. The free market rate is now some 65 riyals to the dollar.

Prime Minister Haider Abu Bakr Al Attas said the 1994 budget should have been

drawn up on the basis of decisions by Yemen's cabinet which would give local governments more power over their own affairs.

"It was prepared otherwise and this is the reason why it still has not been approved," he said in an open letter published by the weekly Sawt Al Ummal.

Mr. Attas' letter was replying to charges by President Ali Abdulla Saleh that the prime minister was to blame for failing to present the budget.

Decentralisation was one of the main features of a national accord reached last week by various political parties aimed at ending a crisis that has threatened to split Yemen in two.

Under the constitution, the fiscal year in Yemen starts on Jan. 1, and the budget should be referred by the cabinet to parliament for approval at least two months before then.

businessman, has launched a \$10 billion postwar reconstruction programme and set Lebanon on the road to economic recovery since taking office in October 1992.

He and central bank Governor Riad Salameh and Finance Minister Fuad Siniora, who accompany him, are seeking British financial know-how to help develop the Beirut financial markets that reigned supreme in the Middle East before the civil war.

They will also be looking for ways that British banks can help Lebanon's banking sector modernise and play an increasing role in reconstruction, Lebanese officials say.

British companies are eyeing some of the dozens of contracts on offer in Lebanon and Mr. Hariri has set aside the last morning of his visit for meetings with them.

U.K. companies interested in Lebanese projects include Trafalgar House for a new Beirut airport, Taylor Woodrow for a sports city and Luings for a 360-bed Beirut general hospital.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY JANUARY 24, 1994

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation and close ties will be pleased with the progress made.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Begin new week properly by improving appearance and then having conferences with important people who can be of assistance to affairs vital to your well-being.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Excellent opportunities come your way today so that you can get all of your affairs on a more practical footing and thereby increase security, which pleases family as well.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) A good day to go after personal goals and to confide in friends what your ambitions are so they can assist you to achieve your desired success.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) It is important to be sure you attend group affairs that are important.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) This is an ideal day to take steps to realise some big aims you have been considering. Contact influential people who can assist your project.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Look to that ethical and successful friend for the ideas you need to get ahead yourself. Be sure you attend group affairs that are important.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) This is a good day to contact one who is familiar with your problematical affairs and get expert advice how best to solve them.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) By having long talks with associates at this time you will be able to settle matters of policy and plan more profitable ways of operating.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Be sure you impress on fellow associates that you are a hard worker and that you have for more practical sense than they realise.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Show your devotion to associates throughout the day by doing what is expected of you and giving a pat on the back where deserved by them.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Be very practical in the handling of all business or personal affairs so that associates can assist your project.

THE Daily Crossword by Florence C. Adler

| ACROSS | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 | 52 | 53 | 54 | 55 | 56 | 57 | 58 | 59 | 60 | 61 | 62 | 63 | 64 | 65 | 66 | 67 | 68 | 69 | 70 | 71 | 72 | 73 | 74 | 75 | 76 | 77 | 78 | 79 | 80 | 81 | 82 | 83 | 84 | 85 | 86 | 87 | 88 | 89 | 90 | 91 | 92 | 93 | 94 | 95 | 96 | 97 | 98 | 99 | 100 |
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Bosnian Muslims appeal for air strikes after 6 children killed

SARAJEVO (R) — Bosnian Muslims appealed Sunday for NATO air strikes against Serb gunners besieging Sarajevo, asking what more must be done to spur military intervention after six children were killed by mortar fire.

Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic said Saturday's attack only a few hundred metres from U.N. peacekeeping Force Headquarters in a city designated a U.N. "safe area" was another Serb snub, a perverse outside world.

"This act humiliates the international community and the dignity of the United Nations and makes efforts to reach peace at Geneva talk absurd," Mr. Silajdzic wrote in a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali.

"We ask you in request the bombardment of Serb positions around Sarajevo according to U.N. and NATO resolutions. What more must happen before U.N. resolutions to protect six Serb besieged enclaves in Bosnia" be implemented?" he asked.

The letter was also sent to NATO Secretary-General Manfred Woerner, to Greece as the current president of European Union and to peace mediators Lord Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg.

There has been little sign

that the international community is prepared to step up the Bosnian conflict by launching air strikes. Western nations have in recent days been talking more about pulling their forces out.

Six children were killed and three seriously wounded Saturday as two mortar bombs slammed into their sleigh run in a hilly residential district one kilometre from Serb lines.

A U.N. relief spokesman said two brothers who suffered severe leg wounds in the attack would be airlifted abroad for urgent medical care Monday.

"It is feared that they could lose the legs if they are not evacuated," Kris Janowski, spokesman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in Sarajevo, told Reuters.

He identified the boys as Elvir Ahmetdzic, 14, and his brother Admir, 12.

At the Vatican, Pope John Paul, in a speech on the Roman Catholic Church's International Day of Prayer for Bosnia, edged towards support of military intervention to stop the bloodshed.

"Appropriate authorities have the responsibility to try everything humanly possible to disarm the aggressor and create conditions for a just and lasting peace," he said.

A senior Vatican source has said the Holy See would support "precise, proportionate and perhaps demonstrative" military action in expelling Yugoslavia to stop aggression if all else failed.

The United Nations, meanwhile, reported that aggression of one kind or another was continuing on the battlefronts.

In Muslim-controlled Sarajevo, a total of seven people were confirmed killed and seven wounded by random shelling and sniping in the past 24 hours while one person was killed by Bosnian army fire on the Serb side.

U.N. military spokesman Colonel Bill Aikman said heavy fighting flared anew in Vitez, central Bosnia, where Croats are fighting Muslims.

British U.N. soldiers observed a helicopter, believed to be Croat, flying into the Vitez area and hovering over a quarry in an apparent supply run to Croat toxops, Col. Aikman said.

Such flights are forbidden under the NATO no-fly zone over Bosnia.

Col. Aikman said Bosnian Croat forces hit the Muslim-controlled part of Gornji Vakuf and the Muslim-controlled town of Kakanj which was ousted in 1992 by Mr. Milosevic.

"This was very unusual," Col. Aikman said, referring to the weaponry. At least one civilian was killed and 11 were wounded in the Kakanj outrage, he said.

Serb forces continued harassing northeastern government enclaves with artillery but did not advance in the ground.

Olovo, straddling a vital corridor to the virtually besieged government industrial bastion of Tuzla, was hit by 110 artillery rounds while Gradacac took 29 rounds. Celic 51 and Dastansko 23, Col. Aikman said.

In the southwest, Croat forces were stepping up their artillery siege of the Muslim quarter of Mostar, blasting it with 63 shells and drawing 12 rounds of return fire.

In the breakaway Krajina region of Croatia, Serbs voted Sunday in a run-off presidential election whose importance has been heightened by a recent rapprochement pact between Belgrade and Zagreb.

Milan Martic, who is backed by Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, is running against Milorad Babic, a former president of the self-proclaimed Republic of Serb Krajina which was ousted in 1992 by Mr. Milosevic.

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Brush fire kills 26 Argentine firefighters

BUENOS AIRES (R) — Twenty-six firefighters, most of them teenagers, died trapped in a ring of flames while fighting a brush fire in Patagonia Saturday, Argentine officials said.

At least 17 of the dead were youths between 12 and 17 years old training with the all-volunteer local fire brigade, police told reporters in Puerto Madryn, 1,400 kilometres south of Buenos Aires. Three of the victims were women.

Colleagues said the victims had suddenly found themselves trapped inside a tightening ring of flames when the high winds typical of Patagonia shifted. "There was this gust of wind and the fire encircled the group," the deputy head of the fire brigade told a radio interviewer. "We found their shovels first, then their helmets — and then we started finding their bodies."

The head of the fire brigade was dismissed on the spot for sending an inexperienced group into a danger area, DYN news agency reported.

The fight to contain the fire was complicated by lack of aerial guidance. Mechanical problems grounded the only helicopter nearby, Chubut province Governor Carlos Macri told reporters.

Maestro decreed three days' official mourning in Chubut province and called in heavy earth-moving equipment from nearby areas to attack the fire head-on from Sunday morning.

"We're all completely devastated," he told a local radio station.

Local media said the fire had so far ravaged some 2,500 acres (1,000 hectares) of land around Puerto Madryn, a town on the Atlantic near the Valdes peninsula — one of the world's prime havens for sea lions and one of Argentina's top tourist spots.

Officials piece together data on Indonesia quake

TERNATE, Indonesia (R) — Hundreds of homes, offices and churches were destroyed and at least 1,000 people were evacuated in Friday's Moluccan earthquake, officials said Sunday, raising fears of a possible high death toll.

But poor communications meant that more than 48 hours after the quake, the extent of destruction remained unclear.

Officials close to the affected areas put the death toll at two from the quake on the remote Moluccan Island of Halmahera, with dozens of people injured. Other accounts said eight people had died.

But the information on fallen buildings and evacuations reaching officials in this island town off the coast of Halmahera suggested the figure could be much higher.

"I think it was very bad. Some people don't want to give the true figures or maybe they just don't know," an official in Manado, on the island of Sulawesi and 280 west of Halmahera, told Reuters.

The quake, measuring 6.8 on the open-ended Richter Scale, was followed by 183 aftershocks, some measuring 4.5 officials in Manado said there were fears of a tidal wave or a volcanic eruption.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Anand defeats Yusupov

WUK AAN ZEE, The Netherlands (AFP) — Viswanathan Anand of India scored a third victory against the Russian-born Arthur Yusupov of Germany in the fifth round of the World Chess Championships here. Anand increased his score to 3.5 points against Yusupov's 1.5. Dutch grand master Jan Timman also won the fifth round of his match against Joel Lautier of France to bring his score to three points to Lautier's two. Timman, playing white, has improved his game since the third round when he lost against Lautier, and has fought back to gain a strong advantage, with three games still to play. After the five rounds Russian Valery Salov is leading his countryman Alexander Khalifman by four points to one and needs only half a point to knock his opponent out of the contest.

Weissflog breaks record on Japanese hill

SAPPORO, Japan (AFP) — Jens Weissflog of Germany continued to dominate the World Cup Ski Jumping events here Sunday with a record 125.0-metre leap off the Okurayama large hill. Weissflog, who clinched an easy victory here Saturday, earned 253.4 points with another solid jump of 118.0m on the second leg for his fifth world cup win this season. "I did not expect that I could do it," Weissflog said after breaking the course record set a year ago by Kenji Suda of Japan. And crediting "good conditions, good winds and a little bit of luck" during the two-day competition. The victory proved the 1984 Olympic gold medalist, who also broke a hill record last month at Oberstdorf, Germany, was ready to make a medal charge at the Lillehammer Winter Olympic games starting Feb. 12. But despite his current success, the German ace repeated that he would retire after the season. World cup leader Espen Bredesen of Norway finished second for 244.0 points with jumps of 115.0 and 120.0m, compared with his ninth spot at the previous event on Saturday.

Brazilian wins Miami Mile

MIAMI, Florida (AP) — Brazil's Edgar Martins de Oliveira won the Miami Mile here Saturday in 4 minutes 01.0 seconds, edging out Poland's Michal Bartoszak and American Steve Scott for the men's elite title. Bartoszak was six-tenths of a second off the pace and Scott a full second behind the winner. Kenya's Joao NTyamba (4:02.3) was fourth and England's Paul Fifeary (4:02.6) was fifth. In the women's race, Canada's Angela Chalmers won in 4:33.9 with American Suzy Hamilton second in 4:36.3 and Canadian Paula Schnurr third in 4:37.8. The legends race, featuring past top milers in staggered starts based on handicap, ended in a tie between Kenya's Kit Keino and American Marty Liquori in 5:23.6. New Zealand's Peter Snell was third with England's Steve Cram fourth.

Ben Johnson's doctor indicted

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — The doctor who gave Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson the steroids that cost him an Olympic gold medal has been accused in a federal indictment of selling illegal steroids in Florida. Jamie Asaphan, 48, a native of the Caribbean island of St. Kitts who has a medical practice in Toronto, was charged in the indictment unsealed Friday with selling more than 11 pounds (5 kilogrammes) of steroids laced with cocaine to undercover agents for \$30,000 in Florida during August 1991. Authorities had been trying to extradite Asaphan since last year. He was arrested Jan. 8 when his flight from the Antigua to Canada was diverted to New York City because of bad weather. Since his arrest, he has pleaded innocent to a companion federal indictment in Buffalo, N. Y., charging him with selling 1,300 vials of steroids for \$44,000 to undercover agents who posed as the owners of a Florida chain of physical fitness centres.

Loughran keeps crown

BELFAST (AFP) — Irishman Eamonn Loughran hung on to his World Boxing Organisation (WBO) welterweight title here in the early hours of Sunday morning by a unanimous points decision against Italian Alessandro Duran. In a brawl of a fight the 22-year-old champion always had too much power for Duran, although the Italian's jab caused Loughran the odd problem. The 28-year-old challenger was shaken by a left from Loughran in the third round and a right in the seventh, but the punch that worried him most of all came after the bell at the end of round eight. The champion was fortunate to escape a censure, and eventually capitalised to cruise home by wide margins on all three judges' cards. Indeed, American referee Ron Lipton had to halt the final round for the doctor to inspect a nasty cut above Duran's right eye before allowing the Italian to continue. Loughran commented: "It was a scrappy fight. He was a bit of a spoiler. He tried to upset my plans, but I came through and boxed very well. At no time did he hurt me."

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANIA HIRSCH

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SMOKE SCREEN!

Both vulnerable. South deals.

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NEW IN BRIEF

Israeli Arabs ask to meet Assad

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Arab politicians, trying to prise open ties with Arab states, want to visit Syria to pay condolences to President Hafez Al Assad on the death of his son, one politician said on Sunday. Abdul Wahhab Al Darawsheh, of the Arab Democratic Party, said he asked Egypt's ambassador in Israel to pass on the request on Saturday and would appeal to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to intervene. Arab mayors of towns in Israel have sent condolences to Mr. Assad, whose son Basel died in a car crash on Friday. "We hope to pay our respects to President Assad and at the same time strengthen our ties with the Arab Nation, of which we are a part," Mr. Darawsheh told Reuters. Israel has 800,000 Arab citizens and their representatives are waging a campaign of acceptance among Arab states which have long excluded them. Delegations have visited Jordan and PLO headquarters in Tunisia in the past. Israeli Arabs can also visit Egypt and make pilgrimages to Muslim holy sites in Saudi Arabia.

Bomb kills Israeli-affiliated militiaman

MARJAYOUN (AP) — A roadside bomb exploded near a patrol of the Israeli-affiliated South Lebanon Army militia Sunday, killing a militiaman, security sources said. The source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the bomb went off at midday (1000 GMT) as the patrol was passing near the Houla crossing, one of five gateways into Israel's self-styled "security zone." There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

Australia warned of Indonesian nuclear crisis

CANBERRA (R) — Australia's conservative opposition urged the government Sunday to prepare for a nuclear emergency if neighbouring Indonesia, described as geologically unstable, goes ahead with a nuclear power plant. "Australia should have some idea about the extent of the effect on Australia of a nuclear accident in Indonesia," said opposition environment spokeswoman Chris Gallus as she called for an environmental impact assessment. "Australia must have an action plan in case of such an accident," she said in a statement. Indonesia said on Thursday it was considering whether or not to build a 600-megawatt nuclear power plant in Java after a Japanese engineering firm stated last month that the project was feasible. Critics say Indonesia's geological instability makes nuclear reactors a high risk, especially in Java, the country's most densely populated region.

56 journalists reported killed in 1993

NEW YORK (AP) — Fifty-six journalists died while working in 1993, with more killed in Algeria, Bosnia, Somalia and in former Soviet republics than in any other countries, the Committee to Protect Journalists said. "What is striking about both Algeria and (formerly Soviet) Tajikistan is that the attacks on journalists are symptoms of enormous political upheavals which have been largely ignored by the Western press," William Orme, the committee's executive director, said in a statement released Sunday. The committee compiled a list of those killed in each country, totaling 56, plus a list of 16 others whose deaths are being investigated. Fewer reporters were killed in 1993 than the record 61 who died in 1991, but more died in 1992. In that year, the committee reported that 49 journalists were killed or presumed dead worldwide. Most of this year's victims were local residents working for local and international news organisations, the New York-based committee said. In many cases, the reporters were targeted for assassination by ethnic, religious and nationalist extremists.

Talks begin on repatriation of Eritreans

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Talks have begun here for the voluntary repatriation of Eritrean refugees numbering over half a million in Sudan. The Eritrean commissioner for refugees arrived here Saturday to discuss arrangements for the repatriation operation with the Sudanese officials concerned as well as the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) here. On his arrival the envoy went straight into a meeting with Sudanese Minister of State for Refugees Abdul Rahman Siral Khatim. The Eritrean official said in a statement carried by the Sudan News Agency (SUNA) that Eritrea had made "thorough" preparations to receive the returning refugees.

Iran deputy backs disgraced cleric

TEHRAN (AFP) — A member of Iran's parliament Sunday backed Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri, now disgraced for his opposition to the government, as a religious figure and called on Tehran to stop the negative campaign against him. Hassan Mokhtari — a representative from Ayatollah Montazeri's hometown of Najafabad in the central province of Esfahan — said his constituency was interested in following Ayatollah Montazeri as a *mujahid*, the highest source of reference for Shi'ite Muslims. Mr. Mokhtari criticised the negative campaign underway against Ayatollah Montazeri, once the heir to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as Iran's spiritual leader, and called on the authorities to stop them. It was the first time in two years that the possibility of Ayatollah Montazeri serving as the Shi'ite leader was raised by a parliamentarian in public. In November 1992, former deputy Morteza Aliviri said 80 to 100 deputies in the 270-seat parliament favoured having the ayatollah as the leader.

3 Iraqis float across Dead Sea into Israel

TEL AVIV (AP) — Three Iraqis requesting political asylum in Israel floated across the Dead Sea from Jordan last week and are now being questioned by police, a newspaper reported Sunday. It was the second group of Iraqis to infiltrate Israel in a week. Iraqi citizens who oppose President Saddam Hussein periodically seek asylum from Israel. The daily Haaretz said the three Iraqis, Salah Ben, 39, Ismail Ben, 39, and Bassam Vatayir, 27 crossed the Dead Sea from Jordan in their boat and surrendered to soldiers who turned them over to police. They are now being held in an Israeli jail for questioning, the daily said.

Kurdish leader in France arrested

PARIS (AFP) — French authorities have placed under house arrest a Kurdish leader and are planning to expel him despite his assertion that his political actions are legal, an anti-racism group said here Saturday. The Movement Against Racism and for Friendship between People said Azad Dere had been questioned by police in Paris on Thursday and then ordered to remain at home in the South of France. Interior Minister Charles Pasqua signed an expulsion order for Mr. Azad Dere on Dec. 30 as part of a Europe-wide crackdown on Kurdish activists. Mr. Dere told AFP by telephone he had been detained while acting as an interpreter for a visiting Kurdish delegation. "My activities in France are perfectly legal," he said. "I have a resident's permit that is valid until 2003." Police had placed him under house arrest "until they can find a country that will accept me after my expulsion from France," he said, adding that the expulsion order was a result of pressure from the Turkish government.

38 arrested in southern Egypt

ASSIUT, Egypt (R) — Egyptian security forces arrested 38 people in the southern town of Assiut Sunday as part of a sweep against suspected militants, the national security chief said. General Nasser Zaher said the campaign would also target the towns of Badri and Dayrut and militant mountain hideouts in the south of the country. Seventeen policemen were killed last month in Assiut, a focus of Muslim fundamentalist unrest where serious armed conflict broke out in March 1992.



YOUNG VICTIMS: The bodies of five of the six children killed by a shell while playing in fresh snow in Sarajevo Saturday (see page 8) are laid out in a morgue. The decapitated body of the sixth child was in another morgue (AFP photo)

Klestil ponders mistress or job

VIENNA (R) — Austrian President Thomas Klestil, coming under pressure to choose between his mistress and his job, promised Sunday to sort out his personal problems and end a mounting scandal without delay.

Mr. Klestil's wife, Edith, left him earlier this month because of his relationship with foreign ministry official Margot Loeffler, an aide whose duties brought her close to the president.

"My private problems have not become easier," he told Sunday's mass-circulation *Neue Kronen Zeitung*. "But it's in my very own best interest to solve them quickly." Mr. Klestil, a suave 61-year-old career diplomat allied to the Conservative People's Party (OEV), was elected president in 1992, replacing Kurt Waldheim.

Rumours of a split between Austria's president and first lady were kept under wraps by an unusually reticent tabloid press until Mr. Klestil admitted last week that his wife had moved out after 37 years of marriage.

A day later, photographs of Ms. Loeffler were splashed across front pages, and state-run television, reluctantly, took up the story of his affair.

Now, with wild reports of a "lovestest" in the federal presidency office for military emergencies, the scandal has

become fully blown, with suggestions in the media that Ms. Loeffler be given some foreign embassy post far away from Vienna.

Thomas Klestil must decide. Either he wants to enjoy private life with his female colleague or continue in office," said OEVP women's group member Maria Gfeller at the weekend.

She said Mr. Klestil had won the presidential election by using his wife to portray himself as a happy family man, "which was not true."

"This was a dirty trick to play on the Austrian people," Ms. Gfeller said, adding that Mr. Klestil should have resolved his "hormone crisis" with his wife. "Now to not divorce but carry on with the other woman, that's really low down."

Although largely ceremonial, the office of president is highly respected by Austrians. One of Mr. Klestil's promises on taking office "is to repair any damage" that might have been done to foreign relations by a "certain controversy."

He also promised to be candid.

"If I now have problems like many others have, I can only say, the people certainly don't want some plaster saint but a man with normal feelings and weaknesses and vulnerabilities," he told the newspaper.

Asked if a foreign posting for Ms. Loeffler would resolve the problem, Austria's first lady said: "That is not the only solution to the problem. But it would help."

"These problems have no negative effect on the conduct of my office. My capacities are in no way limited by them," Mr. Klestil added.

Mr. Klestil's mandate lasts another five years. Although his office is politically non-partisan, the scandal is a potential embarrassment to his party in a year which includes state elections, a referendum on joining the European Union, and a general election.

Mr. Klestil's wife, Edith, in an interview with Vienna's *Der Standard* newspaper on Saturday, said the head of state's affair with Ms. Loeffler had become an unbearable embarrassment to her.

Asked how long it had been going on, she said she did not know, but added: "In any case, too long."

"If people talk to me and ask me why I am not seen very often with the president I don't want them to get the impression that I am a lazy person who does not take her duties seriously," she said.

But "you don't simply throw 40 years with your partner into the garbage can," she added. The Klestils have three grown-up children.

Asked if a foreign posting for Ms. Loeffler would resolve the problem, Austria's first lady said: "That is not the only solution to the problem. But it would help."

Rival army factions fight in Lesotho

MASERU (AFP) — Fierce fighting between rival army groups erupted Sunday in the capital of the southern African Kingdom of Lesotho, killing at least two rebel soldiers, a diplomat said.

The clashes erupted shortly after dawn and the diplomat said "ferocious shooting" lasted about 35 minutes, followed by two hours of sporadic gunfire, interspersed by mortar bombs.

The U.S. embassy warned people to vacate the capital, saying further heavy fighting

between the two groups was expected.

Radio broadcasts warned

Maseru residents to stay indoors and South African Foreign Minister Piki Botha warned people not to travel to Maseru because of the fighting between loyal and rebel army troops.

"South Africans are requested not to travel to Maseru and its environs until the situation has returned to normal," Mr. Botha said in a statement Sunday from Pretoria.

At least two rebel soldiers

were killed in Sunday's shoot-out, adding to the two others killed in earlier clashes last week.

The British Foreign Office told its citizens in Lesotho to stay indoors Sunday.

The conflict was apparently sparked by a demand for a 100 per cent pay rise by the rebel soldiers, and diplomats do not believe the uprising is related to dissatisfaction with the six-month-old government of Prime Minister Nsuti Mukhchile.

Death of Assad's son sparks grief and fears for stability

NICOSIA (AFP) — Syrian President Hafez Al Assad buried his eldest son and heir apparent Basel over the weekend as ordinary Syrians and diplomats expressed fears of political instability in Damascus.

His son's death in a car accident in Damascus Friday came less than a week after Bill Clinton and Mr. Assad held a summit in Geneva, where the U.S. president described Syria as "the key" to a full Arab-Israeli peace settlement.

Basel was buried on Saturday in the family's village of Kordaha, northern Syria, in a funeral attended by several Arab leaders as well as 100,000 mourners.

When Mr. Assad arrived at Kordaha airport he appeared composed and urged crowds to be calm, but he later burst into tears at the ceremonies in Naesha Mosque.

"We are very afraid the president will be affected by the tragedy which hit him at a very delicate time in the region," said Asad Yunes, a villager. "But he's a believer. He will survive this."

Mr. Assad, 63, who has had heart problems, has maintained stability in his country with an iron-fist during his 24-year rule, and over the last two years he was widely seen as grooming Basel, 31, to be

his successor.

An army major, fine horseman and marksman, Basel was in charge of the elite Republican Guards protecting the Syrian leader.

Mr. Assad has been preparing

the succession for several months by giving his son increasing responsibilities, including key issues regarding Lebanon, where Syria maintains 35,000 troops, diplomats said.

Last May he was entrusted with the delicate task of eradicating a major smuggling operation allegedly run by Mr. Assad's eldest brother, Jamil Al Assad, and his allies.

Basel crushed the smuggling activity which centred around the Syrian port of Latakia, in cooperation with the Lebanese authorities across the border in northern Lebanon.

"No one could have done what Basel did in this town. He was the best member of the president's family," Jawdat, a merchant from Latakia, said.

There have been several reports of rivalry between Mr. Assad and members of his family, particularly tension between the Syrian president and his brother Rifaat.

The president's efforts to groom Basel as his heir had apparently silenced voices of dissent in Syria, where a large part of the population was unhappy with the Alawite's grip over power.

But Basel's death now threatens to crush these efforts.

assume even greater importance.

Mr. Assad's brother earned his reputation after he put down an uprising by the Muslim Brotherhood in 1980 and in 1981.

But a series of excesses followed, prompting Mr. Assad to force Rifaat to live in exile in Europe. He was allowed back in Syria two years ago after an eight-year absence.

A Western diplomat in Damascus also said there were concerns about political friction.

He said Basel's death was "not only a blow to the family but also to the regime's stability, and this tragedy can only raise concerns" about the succession.

Mr. Assad takes major political decisions in cooperation with the ruling Baath Party but he depends on members of his own Alawite community, a minority Muslim religious group, for his personal security.

"We would rather die than accept the land-for-peace principle and recognise Israel," the Libyan leader said.

Syria is officially in a state of war with Israel. But it says it is willing to agree peace with the Jewish state on the basis of United Nations resolutions calling on Israel to give up Arab lands it seized in return for comprehensive peace with its neighbours.

A U.S.-Syrian summit a week ago cleared the way for a resumption of negotiations between Syria and Israel, which hit stalemate over the Golan

overpower.

Basel's death now threatens to crush these efforts.

Hekmatyar seeks to pulverise his capital

KABUL (Agencies) — Troops loyal to Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar rained hundreds of rockets on the capital Sunday, battering Kabul with their fiercest assault in a three-week battle.

The barrage blasted residential areas, the presidential palace and the government-run television station. There were no immediate casualty figures.

Mr. Hekmatyar and his ally, warlord Rashid Dostum, began a bloody battle to oust President Burhanuddin Rabbani on New Year's Day.

Afghan sources said warplanes flown by General Dostum's pilots dropped seven bombs Sunday on Wazir Akbar Khan, a residential area where most diplomats, aid organisations and embassies are housed.

There were reports that a bomb hit the Japanese embassy, but there were no casualties. Most embassies, the United Nations and several aid groups evacuated their international staff from Kabul more than a week ago.

Dostum forces bombed positions held by Mr. Rabbani's Jamiat-e-Islami forces in the south of the city, reports said.

Blistering rocket and artillery battles between Jamiat-e-Islami and the Hezb-e-Islami of Mr. Hekmatyar broke out at first light.

Gen. Dostum's bombers launched attacks from his headquarters in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif on Jamiat-e-Islami positions in villages south of Kabul and on Mr. Rabbani's airbase at Baghram, heavily damaging the runway, reports said.

"Independent sources said

Mr. Hekmatyar's forces had made some gains in Sunday's fighting.

The rebel coordination council, of which Hezb-e-Islami is a part, said it would welcome peace and efforts by a team of Islamic scholars from moderate parties to negotiate an end to the battle, in which thousands of civilians have been killed and injured.

"We are ready to agree to a ceasefire...but the other side should also agree," the council said in a statement after a meeting late on Saturday in Peshawar, Pakistan.

"If the other side does not agree we will also continue to fight," it said.

The council warned banks and foreign institutions not to issue money to Mr. Rabbani's government, which it described as illegitimate.

"All those banks of Afghanistan and foreign institutions which have relations with Afghanistan should not give money to the Afghan government or those who represent the government because there is no legal government in Afghanistan," it said.

It warned of a strong reaction by the council against any such action by banks or foreign organisations.

At least 8,000 people have been wounded in some of the fiercest fighting since insurgents swept the communist government in 1992. Some 700 more people have fled the city.

There have been several appeals for a ceasefire. The U.N., Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have asked the warring factions to lay down their weapons.

2 more die in Algeria; conference faces boycott